
Cultivating Rural Prosperity:



Kentucky's Long-Term Plan for Agricultural Development

**Kentucky Agricultural Development Board
Governor Paul E. Patton, Chair**

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COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR

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Dear Fellow Kentuckians:

The passage of HB 611 and the creation of the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund during the 2000 session of the General Assembly created an unprecedented opportunity for the Commonwealth. For the first time in our history, we have had both the opportunity to develop a long-term plan for the future of Kentucky agriculture and a significant level of resources to begin the implementation of our plan. This plan will allow us to preserve the unique rural culture of our state which has been the mainstay of our values, the source of our work ethic and the strength of our people.

This document represents the first step in our long-term planning process. *Cultivating Rural Prosperity* identifies six major priority areas that need to be addressed to create and sustain rural prosperity in Kentucky. Our farm families have faced unprecedented reductions in their tobacco income and uncertainty about the future of our leading cash crop. This plan highlights the pressing needs for a comprehensive statewide market development effort, improved access to capital for individuals and value-added agri-business, financial support for environmental stewardship efforts, comprehensive farm family education programs, strong local leadership development programs, and cutting-edge research and development initiatives. The plan provides a blueprint for action over the next 10 years, and lays the groundwork for local and statewide action.

The Agricultural Development Board is responsible for ensuring the wisest use of the resources from the Agricultural Development Fund. Over the past year, the Board has become fully engaged in consideration of project proposals. As Board Chair, I am committed to ensuring that our decisions are made with an eye on the future of Kentucky agriculture. If we are to make the most of this unprecedented opportunity, then we must work to ensure that the Agricultural Development Fund is utilized to create new long-term earning opportunities for our farm families.

We face an arduous task. Working together, we can manage our way through the changes faced by our agricultural community to ensure a brighter future for the entire Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul E. Patton".

Paul E. Patton



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COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
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My fellow Kentuckians:

The Kentucky farmer of the 21st century will manage a diversified operation with the flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions. He or she will have numerous options in a state that will be known the world over for the quality and variety of its agricultural products. The process of attaining this goal already has begun, and in the pages that follow you will find a road map to the destination of making Kentucky agriculture second to none. As Vice Chair of the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, I have had the opportunity to help develop this plan, and I am pleased to give it my support.

We must aggressively pursue new markets to make the goals of this plan a reality. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture is leading the way to develop markets for Kentucky farm products all over the United States and around the globe. Our marketing staff is opening doors for Kentucky farmers in beef cattle, fresh produce, aquaculture products, value-added goods and many other items.

A broad cross-section of Kentucky agricultural interests called for the expansion of the Department's marketing office in the Unified Proposal for Kentucky Agriculture that was the blueprint for the legislation that produced the Agricultural Development Board. In meetings across the Commonwealth, farmers consistently identified marketing as the leading component for the future growth of Kentucky agriculture. The Board, in its wisdom, appropriated \$13 million for finding, developing and expanding markets for Kentucky agricultural products.

The Department's Office for Agricultural Marketing and Product Promotion has never been stronger. We have assembled a staff of professional and experienced men and women with strong backgrounds in agriculture and business. We look forward to working with the Agricultural Development Board to achieve our mutual goal of providing opportunities for a bright and prosperous future for Kentucky farmers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Billy Ray Smith".

Billy Ray Smith
Commissioner of Agriculture



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Acknowledgements

Of the people, by the people, for the people

Our government derives its powers from the consent of the governed. Thankfully, we live in a place in which the free exchange of divergent perspectives and ideas is encouraged. In this spirit of healthy democracy, the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy designed a process to develop Kentucky's initial long-term plan for agricultural development. Over the past 18 months, meetings have taken place on local, regional and statewide levels involving hundreds of people committed to developing a common vision for rural Kentucky.

For the first time in our state's history, local agricultural development councils in every county of the Commonwealth have facilitated public discussions about the future of agriculture in their communities. The volunteer hours invested by council members and local forum participants represent a significant contribution to the civic and economic health of the state. The resulting county agricultural development plans constitute the foundation of this document.

The Governor's Office conducted a series of 11 regional meetings that attracted over 600 people. During these meetings, participants were asked to think across county lines and identify the most important issues related to long-term agricultural economic development in their regions. These results were also incorporated into this plan.

Our office held a series of state-level meetings involving agricultural and policy leaders from around the state and nation. Farmers, religious leaders, educators, business people, medical professionals and many others worked long hours confronting the issues facing Kentucky's farm families. They helped develop the solutions to these problems that have been summarized and presented here.

Once the draft document was completed, we conducted another series of regional meetings to share the draft with those people who will be most directly impacted by the implementation of this plan. As a result of these feedback forums, the plan was modified.

We are blessed in Kentucky with a naturally diverse agricultural economy, produced in large part by our diverse geography. The perspectives of the people who participated in the development of this plan are at least as diverse as our landscape. Diversity of perspective within a healthy democracy is a blessing.

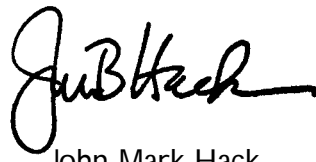
Our acknowledgements for the completion of this document are therefore extended to all those individuals, Kentuckians and others, who participated in this historic process. It has been a great honor for my staff and me to compile the input gathered over the past 18 months into the document you now hold.

Our attention now turns to the implementation of this common vision. Financial resources and political will are necessary ingredients in the plan to revitalize Kentucky's farm economy. Market development, improving access to capital for farmers and value-added processors, providing financial incentives for sound environmental practices, improving educational opportunities for farm families, committing ourselves to the further development of local leadership, and expanding our research and development capacity will require hard work and discipline, from the farm to the General Assembly to the Governor's office. We simply must unify around the principles articulated here and stay the course the plan offers.

This plan should be seen as a living document, a plan that will be regularly reviewed and modified as needs and conditions in Kentucky change. It represents our first step toward the development of a vibrant and prosperous agricultural economy. My hope is that those charged in the future with the review of this plan will adhere to the principles of participatory democracy that produced it. Rather than having a single author, *Cultivating Rural Prosperity* is truly a product of the people, by the people and for the people.

*What lies behind us and what lies before us are
tiny matters compared to what lies within us.*

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "JmHack", with a stylized, flowing script.

John-Mark Hack
Executive Director/CEO
Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund

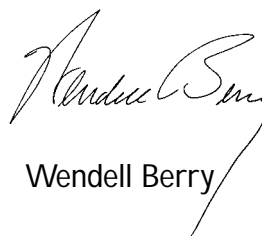
Foreword

Kentucky has been a state for more than two hundred years and it has never had, as a state, a plan to promote the good use of its fields and forests and the prosperity of its rural people. Now at last it has such a plan.

This plan is the result of a lot of effort on the part of Governor Paul Patton, the state legislators who passed House Bill 611, the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy, the Agricultural Development Board, the County Councils, and hundreds of people who attended meetings held in all the regions of the state.

I believe that this project has already done a lot of good simply by stirring up a statewide conversation about the future of our forests and farmlands. That conversation is necessary, and we need to continue it. This plan is only the first accomplishment of our hope that the land of Kentucky and its rural communities can survive in good health as our shared sustenance and pleasure. It is a manual of possibilities, and the possibilities it deals with are real. It thus moves us a significant step away from the confusion and uncertainty many of us felt after the severe reduction of the tobacco economy, and it significantly increases the possibility of informed thought and coherent talk about our problems. Having this plan as a common point of reference will help us to do a better job of planning for our regions, counties, communities, farms, and woodlands.

This is a plan for everybody, compiled in consultation with everybody who wanted to be consulted. A plan for everybody cannot exactly please everybody. It is certainly imaginable that people may find something here to argue with or worry about. I, for one, am extremely uneasy about the science of biotechnology as commercialized by the agribusiness corporations. But I am content to have biotechnology included in the plan because I think the arguments for and against it need to be heard in Kentucky, and the plan properly calls for such a hearing. And so I affirm that it is possible to argue with this plan and yet to be grateful for it.



Wendell Berry